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Mr. McCone:

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The President read this story in the New York Times this morning, and was concerned particularly about the statement that as many as 8-9,000 Viet Cong troops are infiltrating into the central highland plateau. Carl Kaysen asked OCI for a quick assessment of this, and OCI's answer was as follows:

1. Our information does suggest that infiltration is taking place, but it is not hard information, and we are unable to give any figures as to the numbers being infiltrated.
2. We do suspect that following an agreement on Laos at Geneva many of the 10,000 North Vietnamese troops now in Laos will be removed and some are apt to be sent into South Vietnam.
3. We do not know the identity of the US sources cited by Trumbull in this article.

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# **Infiltration Linked to Lull**

By ROBERT TRUMBULL

Special to The New York Times.

SAIGON, Vietnam, July 3—

United States and Vietnamese military authorities are puzzling whether the lull in Communist guerrilla activity in South Vietnam is merely coincidental with reports of massive infiltration of Communists from southern Laos.

Pauses in attacks by Vietcong guerrillas occur periodically and give rise invariably to forebodings among Vietnamese Government forces.

Sometimes these apprehensions have been borne out by renewed strength shown by the lurking jungle foe after a period of regroupment.

Military observers are speculating that the Vietcong forces, estimated at about 25,000 regulars, may have pulled back into their hide-outs to try to devise ways of meeting the threat of new weapons and tactics introduced by the South Vietnamese with United States advice and assistance.

## **Rain a Handicap**

Massive envelopment tactics employing battalions of paratroopers dropped from United States Air Force transport planes, and infantry moved swiftly by United States Army and Marine Corps helicopters, are thought by some authorities to have caused the guerrillas to halt and think.

Actually, however, such wide-ranging operations have failed to produce as many enemy casualties as United States advisors had hoped.

On the other hand, a period of heavy rain such as now blankets much of South Viet-

nam has been utilized by the Communists in the past for regrouping. The downpour handicaps the less mobile Government troops, and the low cloud over prevents much use of helicopters and other airborne weapons in many critical locations.

It would only be following the earlier pattern if refreshed and strengthened Vietcong battalions were to strike hard somewhere in the coming days or weeks, probably at some major provincial town that happens to be poorly protected.

Observers interpret declining Government casualty figures in the last week as an indication of a Vietcong withdrawal to await better opportunities for harassment of thinly spread defense forces.

Government casualties have declined by nearly half in recent days. Last week about fifty were reported killed among loyal forces compared with about ninety in the previous week.

In the same two-week period, the guerrillas' reported death toll rose from about 200 to about 300 as the insurgents relinquished the offensive for the time being.

## **Red Infiltration Reported**

Ominous interpretations are also being placed on persistent reports of heavy Communist infiltration into the central highland plateau, north of Kontum, from southern Laos.

This is where the Communists are believed to plan a "liberated area" with a Communist "provisional government."

United States sources are inclined to agree with their Vietnamese colleagues that such an infiltration is taking place, but there is some skepticism about Vietnamese estimates, which run as high as 8,000 to 9,000.

Some observers speculate that with the pro-Communists firmly in control of the Laotian infiltration route under the new coalition Government, the Communist North Vietnamese may be moving more of their troops in Laos, estimated to number 10,000, from their billets there to new stations in South Vietnam.

This would meet part of the requirement now under discussion in Geneva that foreign forces in Laos be removed.

(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE)

*Editor*